

Editorial: Human contingency learning

Tom Beckers

University of Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Jan De Houwer

Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

Helena Matute

Deusto University, Bilbao, Spain

The present special issue presents an overview of recent developments and controversies in research on human contingency learning. The aim of this research is to understand the way in which humans learn about causal and noncausal relations between events. It seems quite appropriate that an issue on human contingency learning is the first special issue to feature in the newly remerged *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*. In few areas of research has the interplay between human and animal experimental research been so intense and fruitful, with findings and theories mutually influencing each other. Whereas initially, research on human contingency learning was greatly stimulated by the suggestion that models derived from animal conditioning research could be applied to human contingency learning (e.g., Dickinson, Shanks, & Evenden, 1984; Shanks, 1985), in subsequent decades findings and theoretical developments in human learning research have also begun to stimulate developments in animal conditioning (e.g., Beckers, Miller, De Houwer, & Urushihara, 2006; Miller & Matute, 1996). As such, research on human contingency learning spans both former sections of the *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*. Indeed, many papers on contingency learning

that have over the years appeared in either section could just as well have been published in the other section. The reunited journal will undoubtedly represent an enduring forum for the exchange of ideas and cross-fertilization between animal and human learning research.

We are very pleased that David Shanks has kindly agreed to provide an introductory address for the special issue (Shanks, 2007). It was his seminal work with Anthony Dickinson (e.g., Dickinson et al., 1984; Shanks, 1985, 1986, 1987) that has provided much of the impetus for the renewed interest in human contingency learning since the 1980s, and his sustained and important input to the field has been part of what has kept the field thriving ever since. His address not only identifies a number of questions that should inspire future research, but also provides a (sometimes provocative) framework for the contributions that make up this issue. These contributions range from purely fundamental, theoretical analyses (see the paper by Pineño & Miller, 2007), over empirically oriented reports (see Booth & Buehner, 2007; Cobos, López, & Luque, 2007; De Houwer, Vandorpe, & Beckers, 2007; Hagmayer & Waldmann, 2007; Karazinov & Boakes, 2007; Mitchell, Livesey, & Lovibond,

Correspondence should be addressed to Tom Beckers, Department of Psychology, University of Leuven, Tiensestraat 102, 3000 Leuven, Belgium. E-mail: tom.beckers@psy.kuleuven.be
Tom Beckers is a postdoctoral fellow of the Research Foundation–Flanders (FWO–Vlaanderen, Belgium).

2007; Vadillo & Matute, 2007; and Vandorpe, De Houwer, & Beckers, 2007), to more applied contributions (see Allan, Siegel, & Hannah, 2007, and Msetfi, Murphy, & Simpson, 2007), again reflecting the breadth of contemporary research on human contingency learning. In compound, these papers attest to the richness and diversity of current research on human contingency learning and indicate key issues that will need to be addressed in future research.

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